[p. 12a]

361 in smaller communities in the nearby mountains.

In the absence of documentary evidence, it
361 may be surmised that Cherán is an old settle-
174 ment. Archeological remains occur at several nearby places which may represent the antecedent smaller aboriginal settlements spoken of in tradition. About the period from the founding of the original settlement until 1910 there are few data, documentary or traditional. Although individuals were encountered who claimed to remember the time of the French intervention in Mexico, apparently events in the rest of the country influenced Cherán very little. Some outside settlers apparently lived in the town before 1910. Frequent references
[167] were made to a German family that owned a considerable amount of land and had a pretentious house on the plaza, now in ruins. Physical evidence in the shape of ruined structures suggests there once were a number of families of greater wealth in the town than is now the case, but apparently, with the exception noted, these families were native Tarascans.

During the revolutionary period, the town
361 was in the center of the agrarian movement in
175 Michoacán. This movement was related to the Zapatista movement in Morelos, and residents of other villages claim to have been Zapatistas. As Michoacán is also a Catholic stronghold, some villages participated in the religious wars of the twenties. Cherán, however, seems not to have taken an active part in any of these movements. Nevertheless, it suffered from them, and more particularly from the generalized banditry which operated under the cover of one label or another. Twice the town was attacked and burned in the period shortly before 1920, the last time being almost completely destroyed. Apparently many hundreds were killed or starved to death, while still more made their way to the United States, starting a migration which continued until 1929. Since that time, the tide of migration has been to the town. Probably a majority of families in town, though, have been in the United States or have relatives still living in the States.

Some general details of the flora of Cherán
137 have already been mentioned. Nothing can be added to these remarks as the region is un-
136 studied botanically. The situation with respect

343 de Michoacán" we read about *trojes* for storing
127 food, clothes, and idols, but no reference is made to the shape or building materials of these *trojes*. Probably we have here a precedent to the clear-cut distinction between *troje* and *cocina* of the modern Sierra Tarascans.

342 To summarize, we may conclude that the pre-
● 174 Hispanic houses were predominantly of adobe, with thatched, four-shed roofs. The Spaniards
177 introduced tile roofs and modifications in the architectural type. On the other hand, new iron tools and building techniques (shakes and probably interlocking logs) favored the use of wood in construction on a large scale. Although wooden houses have their center of distribution in the Sierra, they are still found in the regions of Uruapan, La Cañada, Lake Pátzcuaro, and elsewhere, once having been much more common in those districts. With timber becoming increasingly scarce, adobe construction has virtually displaced wood in the adjoining districts and is invading the Sierra.

CONTEMPORARY TARASCAN
HOUSING PROBLEMS

362 the other hand, are capable of doing a considerable amount of the necessary work on a wooden structure. For those below the higher economic levels, then, it is probable that wooden structures are potentially less expensive than are those of masonry and adobe. In other words, in terms of the distribution of skills within the population, wooden structures are more apt to produce adequate housing if space be the main objective. It should be observed, however, that this probably is not true in many Lake and Cañada villages, where access to timber is absent or difficult, but skill in making adobe bricks is common.

As has been indicated, about 20 percent of the population of Cherán is inadequately housed according to Tarascan standards. For these, any change in housing conditions quite obviously is related to wider economic problems and conditions. What of the other 80 percent according to ideal standards? Until medical determination is made of the proper amount of living space per person in the Tarascan climate, no complete answer to this question can be made. It can be asserted, however, that better housing is possible for most of this 80 percent if two things could be accom-

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
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ten of the *Once Pueblos* of pre-Conquest days.

South of La Cañada stretches an elevated area of high mountains which cradle wide and fertile valleys. This is the fabled La Sierra country.

East of La Sierra the land falls away to the lower elevation of the lake country which includes the basins of Lake Cuitzeo and Lake Pátzcuaro. The latter, horseshoe in shape with the curve at the west and the two prongs to the east, has its northern and western shores dotted with Tarascan villages. Within the fastness of the lake lie three important Tarascan islands: Janitzio, an astonishingly enormous rock rising high above the blue expanse, with its picturesque fishing village clinging to one side; Jarácuaro, wide and flat, with its village of hat weavers; and La Pacanda, high and flat, with its farms sitting up above the water's edge.

These areas form the solid nucleus of the Tarascan country, whose people, with surprising vigor, resist outside influences threatening to destroy their traditional way of life.

This is a hilly country with conifers on the highest slopes. The lower hills are starred in the summer rainy season with bright red, clear yellow, and delicate violet wildflowers. Michoacán does not become drab even in the dry season, but rather takes on the colors of old tapestries. Its soil is reddish or saffron, its houses dusty white to deep gray, its roofs brownish red, and its lakes azure blue.

Into this area came the ancestors of the Tarascans sometime between the seventh and twelfth centuries of our era. The German scholar Seler (1908, p. 33), in his interpretation of a questionable sixteenth-century codex called the "Lienzo de Jucutacato," argues that they entered the region in the seventh century, but archaeological evidence does not seem to support such an early date. Certainly by the twelfth century they were located in the Lake Pátzcuaro region, in Zacapu, and in La Sierra at Patamban and Tarecuato (Fig. 1).

In olden days the Tarascans were fierce fighters who, over a period of time, forged an empire which successfully repulsed attacks by Aztec armies. It was their hatred of the Aztecs that

[text continues on p. 4]

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539 312 passed and she had not gone to the fountain and filled her empty jug with water. She fell to her knees and directed her gaze at the rose-rimmed cloud hiding Father Sun. Tearfully, she prayed that the god would enable her to discover water nearby, so as not to incur the anger of her parents.

Her supplication was humble and sincere, because Tzintzin was a good girl. While she remained on her knees, a small beautifully colored bird arose from the center of a cluster of flowers. At that instant the last rays of Father Sun broke through the cloud and revealed drops of water which shone like diamonds falling from the feathers of the rising bird. This was the sign Tzintzin sought.

She parted the flowers and gazed into the pure, clear depths of a beautiful and hitherto unknown spring. Filling her jar, she returned home. Her parents were greatly surprised to see her return so quickly [she actually was late but the narrator said "so quickly" to emphasize the nearness of the new spring] and they supposed that Quanicoti had aided her with the water jar. However, she explained that she had discovered a new fountain of water near the road where her people traveled for decades.

The news of the fountain spread. The people from neighboring villages came to see the new source of water. Its depth was such that they called it Quiritzícuaro (the great fountain), and it still exists today to the east of the village of Paracho.

Always when the pretty Tzintzin visited this spot to hear Quanicoti's protestations of love, Father Sun smiled approvingly upon them with his brilliant, profound eye.

HUANITA

Historical Comment

173 ● 174 [648] In "Just as the Birds," the narrator spoke of one group of Tarascans who travelled northward to settle upon the rocky hill of Zacapu. At some uncertain time in the twelfth century, these Tarascans conquered the people of Naranjo and then moved south-

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east over the mountains into the Lake Pátzcuaro region, stopping at the base of the Cerro (hill) de Guayameo (Fig. 1). Unsettled conditions lasted for probably two hundred years until the Zacapu Tarascans, under Chief Tariácuri, established their supremacy in the region.

Tariácuri is considered the father of the Tarascan empire. Apparently, he lived during the last years of the fourteenth century, since, according to Tarascan count, his reign ended in the Christian year of 1400 A.D. After Tariácuri's death, the kingdom was temporarily divided before it fell to his nephew Tangáxhuan.

The narrator of the following legend erred in referring to Tangáxhuan as Tariácuri's son; rather he was the son of Aramen, Tariácuri's brother. The factual basis of the love story of Tangáxhuan and Huanita lies in that twilight realm where fact and fantasy are difficult to separate. If true, its facts date from the early fifteenth century.

The Legend

Throughout the land of the Tarascans it is still said that on the evenings of *Cutzi-huiripen* (the full moon), as the winds gently move through the birch trees and pass over the flower-covered hillsides, a song may be heard which recalls to the listerners the memory of the charming Huanita.

Huanita was the daughter of the woods, the beloved favorite of Cueróhperi (Mother Nature). The reeds of the lake were less graceful in movement than she; her perfectly molded figure was more beautiful than any flower of the field; and the long silken hair which spread over her voluptuous shoulders exuded a sweeter fragrance than the aromatic *ocote* tree.

Tangáxhuan, son of the powerful Tarascan king Tariácuri, loved Huanita. However, the beautiful daughter of the forest, who also adored the prince, could not disclose her love for him nor weave the threads of his robe because of her special destiny. She had been ordered by the priests of Tariácuri to burn incense in the temple of the gods and not to listen to the words of any lover.

11: Boyd H-4, 5 (1953) 1958
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DISCUSSION

539 Tarascan legends may be examined from many viewpoints, including those of history, ethnology, psychology, and literature. Probably the most important consideration is the basic function they fulfill for the Tarascans—a function so significant that the legends have survived to the present. Only a brief analysis of these factors can be made in this study.

539 173 174 [167] As orally transmitted history they leave much to be desired, but they contain usable references which support other data. While one may doubt that the Tarascans originated in South America, as suggested in "Just as the Birds," migration myths are fairly common in the folklore of Indians of the Americas. To some extent they probably indicate dim memories of tribal migrations.

539 796 782 [727] The reference in the legend of Lake Cuitzeo to the placing of the warrior's heart in the temple as an offering to the sun god, Huriata, is a reasonably accurate account of ceremonial usages. In early times the Tarascans made offerings of deer meat to their gods; later, human sacrifice was instituted. War prisoners were preferred, and one reason for war was to have sufficient victims. In any event, the presentation of the victim's heart was the choicest possible offering to Huriata.

539 [178 193] Items of psychological interest include the need to explain natural features of the countryside, as shown in the story of Quiritzícuaro. The change of Candó from a good to a bad priest in the legend of Huanita may refer to defrocked clergymen of post-Conquest times, but most likely it refers to a period of temporary degeneration among the hereditary priestly class during the days of Chief Tariyaran some two hundred years before Conquest times.

539 175 648 In this same vein, the legend of Inchátiro shows the depressed psychic condition of these indigenous people as the result of the Conquest. The dream portion in the same legend reveals the nature

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